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English 10: AoW #3 - 2014

Directions: Mark the article to demonstrate close, active reading. Record your thoughts as you read by noting comments, questions, areas of confusion, connections, etc.

america.aljazeera.com (<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/9/19/analysis-scotlandreferendum.html>)

Studying the voting results on The Guardian's site linked at <https://msknuthnmps.wikispaces.com/English+10>, may contribute to your understanding. The link is

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/ng-interactive/2014/sep/18/-sp-scottish-independence-referendum-results-in-ful>  
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## **Scotland sticks with the UK, but union fissures laid bare**

by James Maxwell

"The old and the affluent turned out in force this week," said Johnathon Shafi, a spokesman for the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC), as he watched the results roll in at the Emirates Arena in the east end of Glasgow on Friday morning. "Middle Scotland voted in big numbers to maintain the status quo."

As soon as it became clear that Scotland's independence movement had failed to secure majority support for secession, the political post-mortem began.

For Shafi and his fellow RIC activists, it was the overwhelming opposition of older, wealthier Scots to constitutional change that delivered such a strong showing for the pro-U.K. side.

"Professionals in the Borders, Edinburgh and the Orkney and Shetland Isles are resistant to reform," he said. "But many of the urban centers, the Labour heartlands, have gone yes — and in a big way."

Scotland is now a divided country. On Thursday, 55 percent of Scots backed the continuation of the Anglo-Scottish union, while 45 percent voted to abolish it.

As Shafi explained, although unionist sentiment is stronger in better-off neighborhoods, nationalism is now the dominant force in working-class communities — and particularly in post-industrial Glasgow, Scotland's largest city and a former stronghold of the anti-independence Labour Party.

Yet Scotland's leaders, from the both the secessionist and anti-secessionist camps, yesterday agreed that the country should move forward as one.

Speaking at a specially convened rally early Friday morning, not long after the referendum result was confirmed, Scottish National Party (SNP) chief Alex Salmond said he accepted the “democratic verdict of the people” and called on “all of Scotland to do the same.”

“The process by which we have made our decision reflects enormous credit upon Scotland,” he said. “A turnout of 86 percent is one of the highest in the democratic world for any election. This has been a triumph for the democratic process.”

The remarkably high turnout, coupled with the extent of the pro-union campaign’s victory, has convinced unionists that the issue of Scottish independence is now off the table for at least a generation.

“The people of Scotland have spoken, and it is a clear result,” British Prime Minister David Cameron said. “They have kept our country of four nations together ... There can be no disputes, no reruns. We have heard the settled will of the Scottish people.”

The nationalists are not where they wanted to be, but nor are they in a bad place.

But not everyone agrees with this assessment. According to David Torrance, a columnist at The Glasgow Herald, it is not inconceivable that Scotland could hold another independence referendum relatively soon.

“The larger-than-expected margin of the ‘no’ win makes it less likely,” Torrance said. “And Scots may not be up for another grueling two-and-a-half year campaign. But in the long term, 45 percent is a solid basis for a second referendum within the next 10 to 15 years.”

“The nationalists are not where they wanted to be, but nor are they in a bad place,” he added.

The suspicion that the SNP may be preparing the ground for another referendum was reinforced Friday when Salmond unexpectedly announced his resignation from frontline politics. Salmond’s decision clears the way for his younger and fresher deputy, Nicola Sturgeon, to step up.

If Sturgeon can lead a reinvigorated SNP to a third term in power at the devolved Scottish Parliament in 2016, she may find that various political crises at Westminster — foremost among them the rise of English Euroskepticism and the prospect of a U.K. withdrawal from the European Union — converge, tempting the more Europhilic Scots once again toward the exit door.

Joyce McMillan, one of Scotland’s most respected political commentators, thinks Sturgeon could prove an even more effective leader than Salmond.

“There are two reasons for this,” McMillan said. “First of all, she is a less adversarial figure than Salmond and so has more chance of being a unifying national leader. Secondly, she has stronger social democratic credentials, as well a tremendous reputation for competence. All this adds up to one very formidable politician.”

And yet Salmond's achievements in modern Scottish politics are more or less unmatched. As one Labour opponent conceded yesterday, he "turned a minority party into a party of opposition into a party of government."

Intriguingly, the great irony of Salmond's success — and of the Scottish independence debate more broadly — is that it seems to have forced the English to think more carefully about their own role in the union.

In the statement he gave outside Downing Street after the referendum result yesterday morning, Cameron addressed the subject of England's constitutional status, saying, "I have long believed that a crucial part missing from this national discussion is England. We have heard the voice of Scotland, and now the millions of voices of England must also be heard. The question of English votes for English laws — the so-called West Lothian question — requires a decisive answer."

Since the creation of a devolved Parliament for Scotland and a national assembly for Wales in the late 1990s, English nationalist sentiment has risen steadily, as has resentment over the ability of Scottish MPs to vote on legislation that affects English constituencies but not Scottish ones. Post-referendum, these tensions are bound to deepen as Scotland secures greater fiscal autonomy while English regions remain comparatively weak.

Michael Kenny, a professor of politics at Queen Mary University London, believes that any constitutional reform that hands significant power to an exclusively English bloc of MPs is likely to further undermine the foundations of the U.K.'s already teetering political system.

"Perhaps the most appealing solution to the conundrum of finding a way of protecting and representing English interests in a reformed U.K. is an English Parliament," Kenny wrote in a [New Statesman column](#). "But this idea — which has long had a small and zealous set of advocates — remains the most difficult to contemplate, given the size of the English population in this most unbalanced of unions."

Scotland's decision to reject independence this week and the impending departure of Salmond from the British political scene seem to have handed Britain's embattled political class a much-needed reprieve. But it's unlikely to last. The Scottish referendum has exposed fractures in British society that can't be papered over for long.

Author's Purpose:

Intended Audience:

Author's Point of View on the Subject:

On the reverse side, support your response to this question: Why should citizens of the United States care about this?

